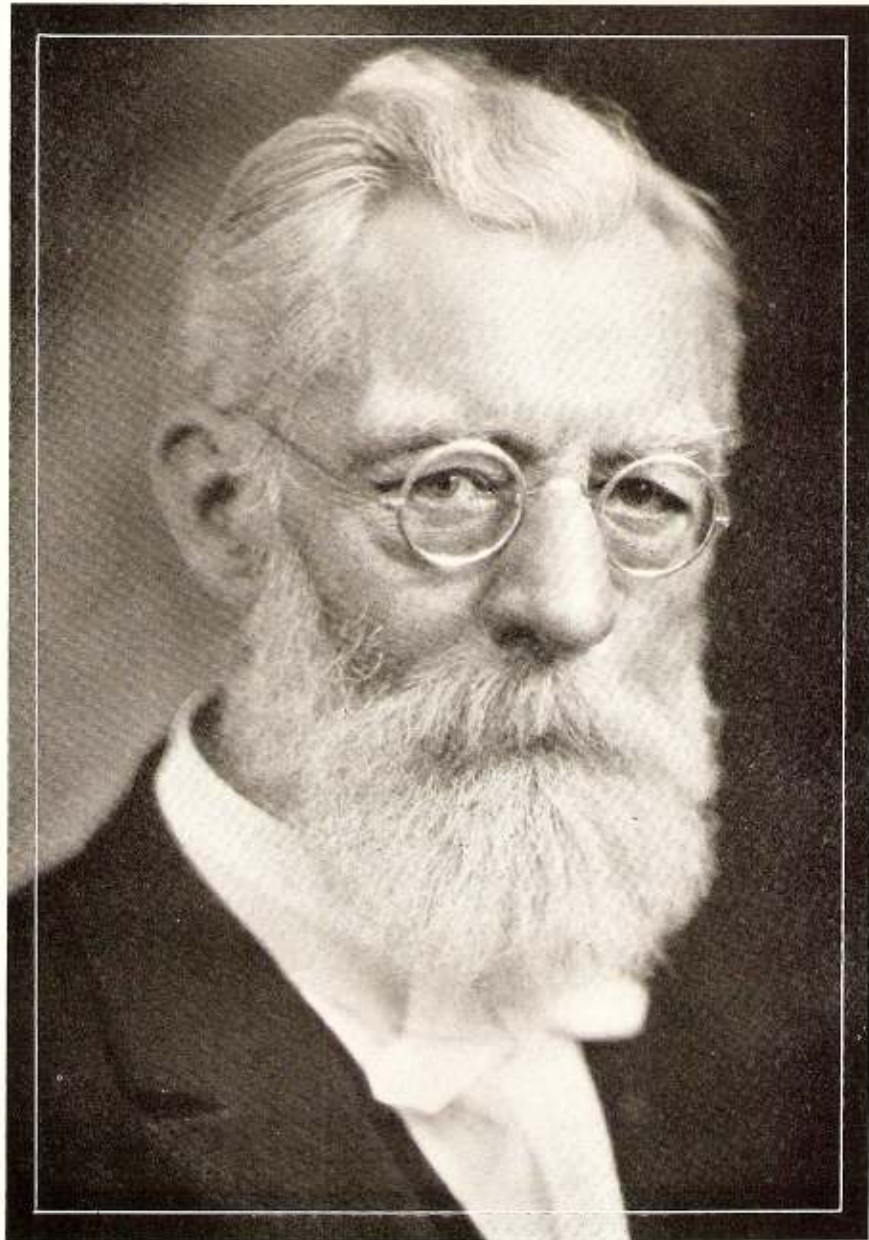


**St. John's
Evangelical Church
of Creston, Iowa**



**Fiftieth Anniversary
Souvenir
1878 = 1928**



REV. J. ERNST BIRKNER

DEDICATION



This souvenir is gratefully and affectionately dedicated to the
memory of the pioneers of
St. John's Evangelical Church, of Creston, Iowa,
and to their descendants
who are faithfully laboring to perpetuate
the "Faith of the Fathers."

THE COMMITTEE

Wm. Elftmann

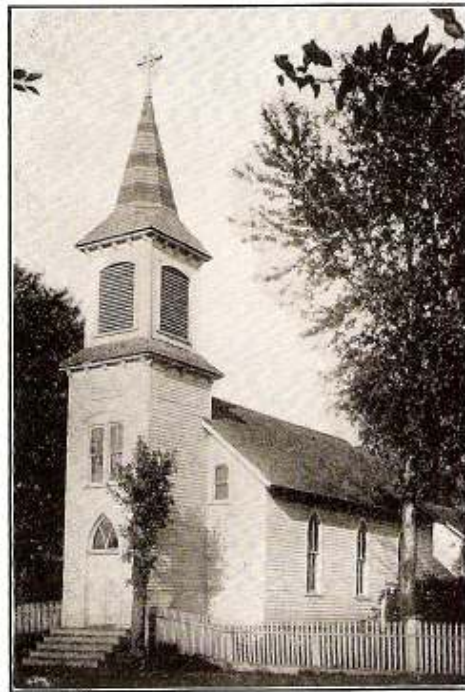
Mrs. Freda Galzhouse

Rev. J. Ernst Birkner

H. J. Birkner

"I have considered the days of old, the years of former times."
Psalm 77:5.

"O come, let us worship, and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our
maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of His pasture,
and the sheep of His hand. Today, oh that you would
hear His voice." — Psalm 95: 6-7.



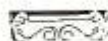
ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

"Praise ye the Lord; O give thanks unto the Lord;
for He is good; for His mercy endureth
forever." — Psalm 106-1.

"I was glad when they said unto me, let us go
into the house of the Lord." — Psalm 122-1.

The St. John's Evangelical Church

OF CRESTON, IOWA



HISTORICAL SKETCH

Looking back over the past fifty years of our church we are deeply impressed by the courage shown and the faith of our forefathers, who, not being wealthy, undertook to establish, build and maintain a church where they might worship God in their accustomed manner. We also are moved to give thanks to God who has crowned our fathers feeble enterprise with unmerited success, for the grace and longsuffering with which He has sustained, comforted and strengthened our faith though we often have been ungrateful and negligent to hear His voice and walk in His ways. We therefore bow our heads in humiliation on this fiftieth anniversary and confess: Not unto us, O Jehovah, but unto thy name give glory, for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth's sake.

On February 4th, 1878 under the leadership of Rev. C. F. W. Brandt of the Missouri Synod nine families adopted the first constitution. They were: Adolf Dunst, Carl Petznick, Wm. Hagedorn, Albert Dunst, Michael Elftmann, Carl Vetterick, Gustav Lenz, Wm. Strey, Carl Fischer. The congregation was then known as: St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church U. A. C. This small but energetic congregation provided for the erection of a church building, which was dedicated to service August 11th, 1878.

It, however, soon became evident that under the prevailing circumstances no progress could be made. On April 21, 1879 this first organization dissolved, the members withdrawing their names from the first constitution, and with the assistance of Rev. Kirchhoff of Burlington, a member of the Evangelical Synod of North America re-organized and adopted a new constitution, changing the name of the congregation to: ST. JOHN'S German EVANGELICAL CHURCH, under which name it has been known ever since. Seventeen families signed this new instrument, they were: Adolf Dunst, Wm Hagedorn, Gustav Lenz, Adolf Pontow, Gustav Ell, Wm. Strey, Albert Dunst, Henry Kientop, Michael Elftmann, John Kurzhals, Chas. Hagedorn, Carl Petznick, Henry Detering, Ferd. Ohlschlager, John Freytag, Albert Jandrey, Henry Heessel. These chose as their first president, Henry Detering, who has since been a member of the church council as secretary for some years, but mostly as the appointed leader.

On September 28, 1879 the first parsonage with an adjoining school-room was built and the congregation called Rev. C. J. Peters as their first resident pastor. Rev. Peters took charge on November 9, 1879.

On March 2nd, 1880 a Ladies Aid was organized with 18 members, which society has been a blessing to the congregation. They at once set to work to purchase a reed organ for the church to improve the singing. This organ was dedicated to service in October of the same year. When on February 19, 1882 the erection of a separate School was undertaken the L. A. bought the lot adjoining to the South for the sum of \$250.00. A building 20x28 was then dedicated to the instruction of the coming generation in the faith of the fathers and the propagation of the German language April 16, 1882. The old school room given to the parsonage.

Having worked faithfully and successfully in building up the congregation Rev. Peters resigned at the beginning of 1883 and was succeeded by Rev. F. C. Krueger.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

In 1888 the church was rebuilt, the present tower with the inviting bell being added to it as also the pulpit-niche and a gallery, making the edifice much more commodious and convenient. In January 1889 Rev. Krueger resigned and the congregation extended a call to Rev. F. Rasche who took charge of the office in April of the same year.



REV. C. J. PETERS
1879 - 1883

In 1890 the parsonage was remodeled and a second story added thereto. The Sunday School Society, consisting of teachers and friends of the Sunday School was organized and has become a boon to the Sunday School ever since. In the fall of 1891 a Young Peoples Society was organized with 21 members.

In 1895 Rev. Rasche followed a call from some other congregation and was succeeded in the work here by Rev. P. Speidel who took over this work in May. In the following year 1896 a new reed organ was installed in the church and the old instrument turned over to the school. On January 1898 Rev. A. Koehler took charge of the congregation for the next five years. He was then followed by Rev. Phillipp Blaufuss.

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

On October 11, 1903 the church celebrated its 25th anniversary, at which time the new and most comfortable seats were for the first time filled to capacity. In 1907 a new and modern building was erected in place of the old parsonage, which was sold and removed from the place East of



REV. F. C. KRUEGER
1883 - 1889



REV. F. RASCHE
1889 - 1895

the church and the school moved there. The new parsonage erected on the hitherto school-lot at a cost of \$3557.00 to which the Ladies Aid contributed \$1636.45 and the Sunday School Society \$80.00. It was dedicated September 27 of the same year.



REV. P. SPEIDEL
1895 - 1898



REV. A. KOEHLER
1898 - 1903

April 21, 1912 another attempt was made to interest the younger set in organizing a Young Peoples Society. It had at the start 36 members and was active till 1916. In 1915 Rev. Blaufuss, after long and faithful service, resigned and the present incumbent of the pastorage was elected to succeed him.

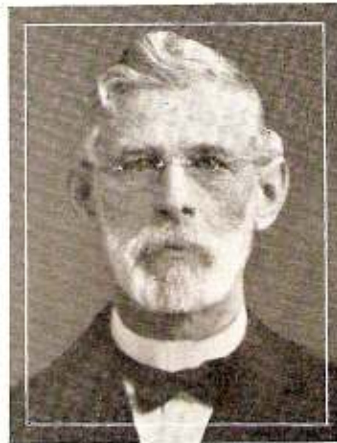
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

Rev. J. Ernst Birkner came here in July 1915. In the annual meeting of January 1916 it was voted to have English services once a month in the evening. In the same year the paving of the street was accomplished at a cost of \$890, to which the Ladies Aid and the Sewing Circle raised the funds.

In 1919 a furnace was installed and the old stove relegated to the school. The Evangelical Guild (formerly Sewing Circle) presented the church with a good piano as a Christmas gift.

In 1921 the duplex envelope system was introduced which since then has gained favor more and more. In 1922 the congregation extended the right of voting and recognition as full members to all those that have been confirmed in this church and have reached the legal age of 21 years.

1925. In the meeting held in October it was resolved that hereafter every second Sunday the English language be used in the morning service.



REV. PHILLIP BLAUFUSS
1903 - 1915

1927. The old constitution was revised and printed in the English language. And now after being served by ministers of the Evangelical Synod of North America, the congregation voted to enter into closer bonds with this body by sending a representative to the annual district conference. In a special service in August the president of the Iowa district formally received and pledged the congregation as a member of the district and the Synod. May this union turn out a blessing to both the congregation and the Synod.

St. John's Evangelical Church has at the present time 95 adult voting members and some 30 junior members. Its regular annual budget totals between \$1400 and \$1500. Within the past fifty years it has contributed to the synodical budget and charities \$8800.00 of which sum, more than a half was raised within the last thirteen years.

648 children and adults received the holy sacrament of Baptism; 320 were confirmed in the christian faith; 185 couple joined into holy wedlock; 6395 received holy communion; and 300 were laid to rest.

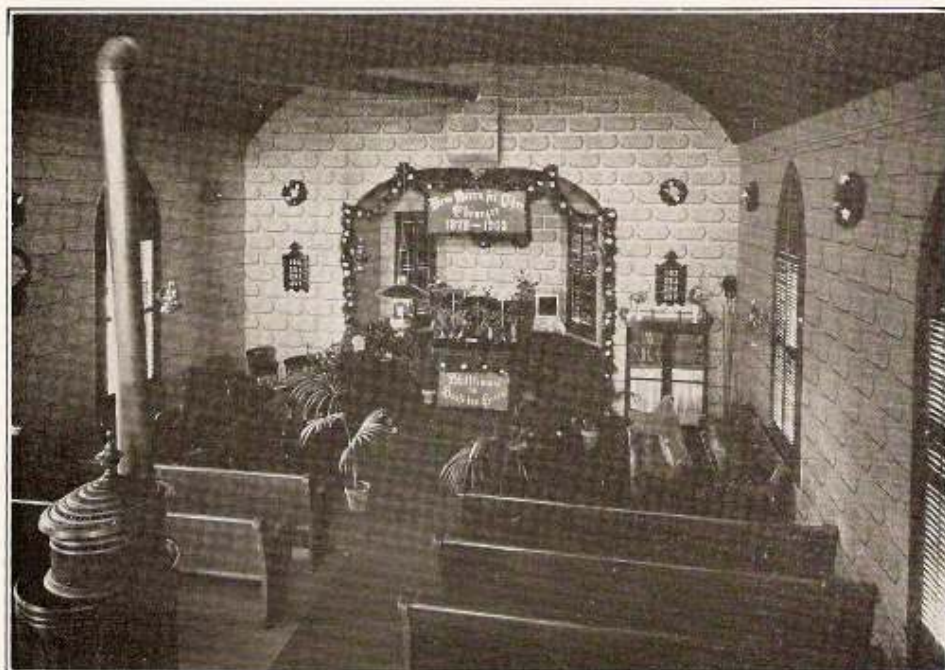
May the blessing of the Father remain with His people, and the peace of Christ, our Lord, rule in our hearts, and the power of the Holy Spirit sanctify and strengthen and preserve us in all good works to everlasting life.

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH



CHURCH AND PARSONAGE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1903



INTERIOR OF CHURCH, 1928

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Our present pastor, Rev. J. Ernst Birkner, arrived in Creston with his family to take charge of his work, July 1915 and has been a faithful and loyal worker.

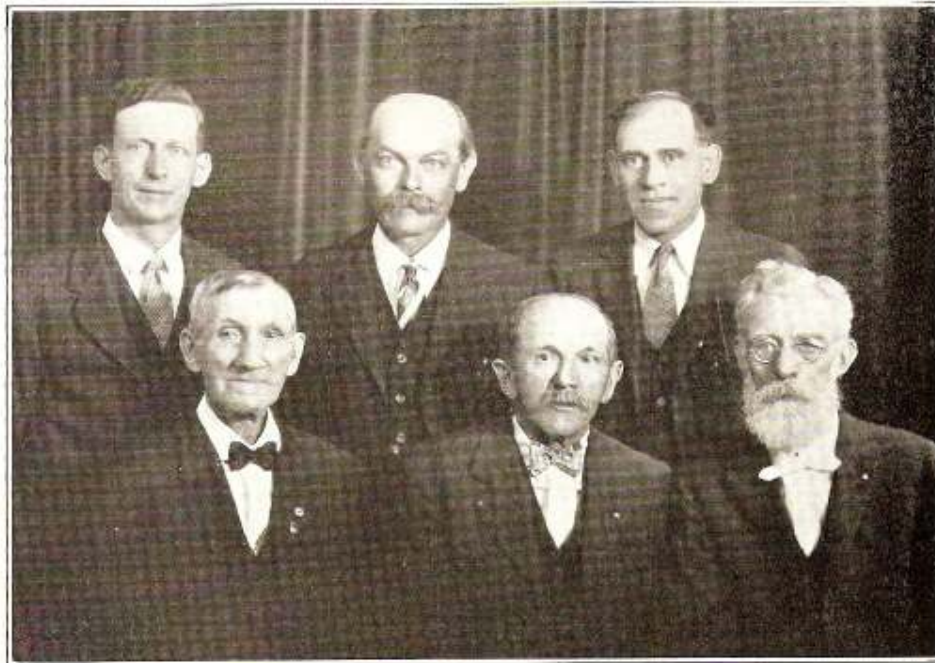
Through his efforts and the untiring efforts of his family, several Young Peoples Societies have been organized and today are active and most helpful organizations, and, as the future welfare of our congregation depends greatly on the younger generation, this has been indeed a great achievement.

The congregation considers it an honor in the fact that the first young man entering the ministry from this congregation, is Siegfried Birkner, youngest son of Rev. and Mrs. Birkner. The entire congregation wishes Siegfried success in his chosen work.

* * * *

CHURCH COUNCIL

Organization: Rev. J. Ernst Birkner, Pastor; Henry Detering, President; Carl Gehrecke, Vice President; Wm. Elftmann, Secretary; George Herbel, Treasurer; Will Heessel, Peter Orth. Mr. Orth is not included in the group shown here as he was called to the bedside of a sick friend when this picture was taken.



WM. ELFTMANN, CARL GEHRECKE, WILL HEESSEL, HENRY DETERING,
GEORGE HERBEL, REV. J. ERNST BIRKNER.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR



HENRY DETERING

Mr. Henry Detering came to Creston in 1877. In the year 1878 he associated himself with the St. John's Evangelical church and took an active part in church and Sunday school work, acting as Superintendent of the Sunday school since the organization of the school, until about 1916 when he was relieved of this work by the younger people.

Mr. Detering has held office since the foundation of St. John's Evangelical church, in 1878. Most of this time he has served as president, rendering the best of service. When we consider fifty years of church work we can imagine that things have not always been smooth, but that there were many obstacles and difficulties to overcome. In July 1926 the congregation conferred upon him the title and degree of "Honorary President" thereby in no way abridging his right as active president. In 1928, our fiftieth anniversary year, we find him still active president, and the congregation feels grateful to him for rendering the church many long years of faithful service.

He is one of the four charter members that still survive, out of the seventeen that organized the church. The other three charter members that are still active and live in Creston at this time are Gustav Lenz, Carl Fischer and Albert Jandrey.



PART OF THE CONGREGATION

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

THE LADIES AID SOCIETY

(Frauen-Verein)

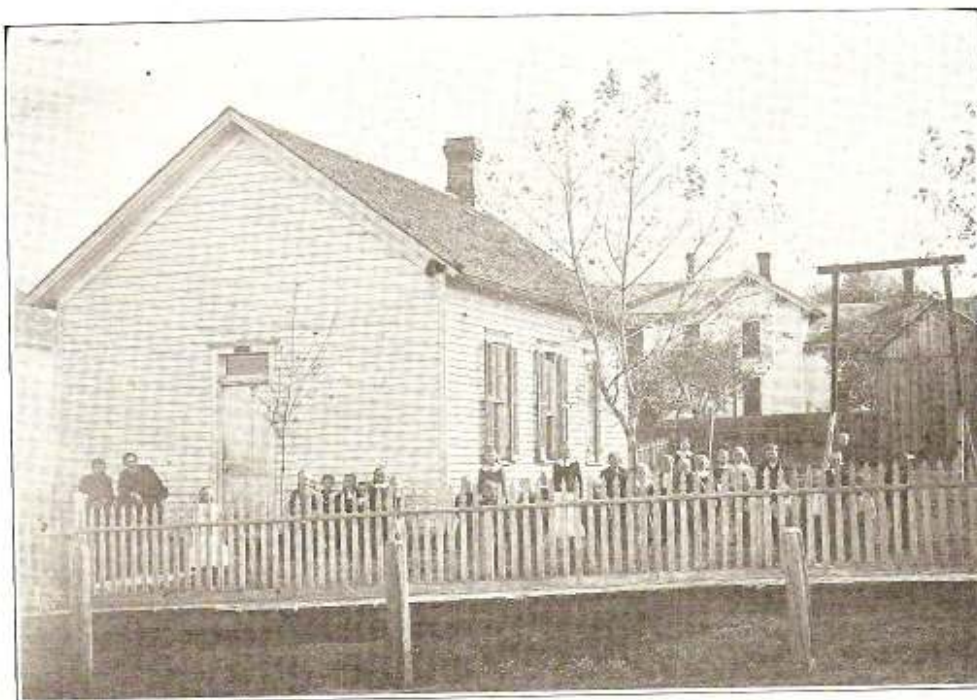
On March 2, 1880 the Ladies Aid was organized with 18 members. In the course of time the number of members has experienced great changes, but the womanly spirit of aid and service has never been lacking. The society now counts fifty members. The language used in their meetings is still the old, good German. The Ladies Aid has been and still is the best helper of the congregation. Whenever there was a dearth in the church treasury and helpless men did not know how to overcome it, the Aid was



MRS. EMILIE BIERSTEDT, MRS. ANNA ELFTMANN, MRS. MINNIE HEESSEL,
MRS. CHRISTINE FALCKE

ready to bridge the gap and thus avoid disaster. We may say, without exaggeration, that if it had not been for the Aid this church had long since ceased to exist. Many a thousand dollars the good ladies have turned over to the church treasury. They sat down and worked hard with needle and thread to raise the necessary money. Their unselfish service shall never be forgotten. The present officers here pictured are: Mrs. Minnie Heessel, president; Mrs. Christine Falcke, vice president; Mrs. Anna Elftmann, treasurer and Mrs. Emilie Bierstedt, secretary.

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH



PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY

This society was organized June 22, 1890 with an enrollment of twenty members. Henry Detering was elected president; Charles Detering, vice president; E. Hulsebus, secretary; Mamie Hulsebus, treasurer; Clara Detering, librarian.

Three of these officers, Henry Detering, Charles Detering and Clara Detering Eastman are still active members of this worthy society.

Officers of S. S. Society at the present time are: Arthur Waltersdorf, president Rev. Birkner, vice president; Freda Galehouse, secretary; Edna Boortz, treasurer; Harold Strey, librarian; Margaret Boortz, alternate librarian. It now consists of twenty-four members, truly deserving more interest and cooperation from all parents and members of the congregation. However, while this society is small in membership, it is one of the most prominent organizations of the church, financing a Sunday School of ninety scholars ranging from Cradle Roll to Bible class with eight faithful and loyal instructors.

The Society furnishes all Sunday School papers, books, quarterlies, primary supplies and presents the scholars with the Cross and Crown rewards.

It also provides entertainment, such as an annual outing and Christmas and Easter gifts and programs, the latter under the supervision of Miss Monica Birkner with the teachers as assistants.



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The Society also finances the Cradle and Primary Department which is under the most efficient direction of Mrs. Margaret Pontow with Miss Charlotte Birkner as an able assistant. This Department was organized March 3, 1925 with a Cradle Roll enrollment of nineteen members, at the present time consisting of forty-eight members.

A record of each child is held and on each birthday a card is sent. When the child reaches the age of four years, it is presented with a Certificate of Promotion and promoted to the Primary Class. This class now consists of thirty-two scholars and is instructed in such a manner as to give the child the right impression of the Bible stories and lessons, such as using a brightly colored and illustrated chart, also the modern sand table, thus preparing them for the more advanced classes of the Sunday School.

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19, 14.

"Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." Matthew, 18, 5.

* * * *

THE BENEFICIARY SOCIETY (Sterbekassen Verein)



MRS. LENA STREY, MRS. MARGARETH PONTOW, MRS. HULDA KIENTOP, MRS. ANNA HERBEL.

This society was organized January 29, 1899 with thirty members, for the purpose to give aid in case of a death of one of its members. It has now a membership of thirty-three and pays out the sum of \$50.00 in case of death to the relatives or beneficiaries of the departed sister. The present officers are: Mrs. Lena Strey, president; Mrs. Anna Herbel, vice-president; Mrs. Margareth Pontow, secretary; Mrs. Hulda Kientop, treasurer. The society has a reserve fund of about \$300.00.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

THE CHOIR

Our congregation has had a Choir since the early days. Though the older choir members have from time to time dropped out, their places have been filled by the younger people.

Mr. Fred Hanneman was the first director and leader. He was faithful in this work until the time of his death. Two members that sang under him are with the choir at the present time. Mr. E. F. Weber took charge after Mr. Hanneman's death and was leader for some time, but after that it was under the leadership of the various ministers, Rev. Koehler being the first minister to take over the choir.



CHARLOTTE BIRKNER, WM. ELFTMANN, ARLINE PONTOW, GOTTFRIED
BIRKNER, JULIUS STREY, MRS. ANNA BIRKNER,
MRS. LENA CASE, MARIE SAFRIS, MINNIE SCHULTZ, HELEN ORTH.

When Rev. Blaufuss was serving the congregation he managed to find about a dozen men in the congregation who were willing to devote their time and started a male choir in addition to the mixed choir. It seemed to be a hard matter to find a leader, so when Rev. Birkner, our present pastor took charge of the ministry here, he found the place waiting for him, but was successful in finding someone to go on with the work. This was Mrs. Lena Case, our present leader. She has devoted much of her time to this cause, and her efforts are appreciated by the congregation. Last fall Mrs. Case accepted an invitation from the May Studio at Shenandoah to broadcast a program which met with pleasing results. We trust that she may not tire in this cause and that she will continue as leader for some time to come.

The choir at present consists of ten members. Miss Arline Pontow is pianist and Miss Charlotte Birkner is organist.

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL GUILD

At a meeting held at St. John's Evangelical church on April 5, 1916, the German Sewing Circle was organized with twenty-six members. Charlotte Birkner was elected president; Freda Galehouse, vice-president; Julia Pontow, secretary; Olga Russell, treasurer.

Our first meeting was held at the parsonage on April 12, 1916. It was decided that we meet every two weeks, at the home of one of the members, and each member to be assessed five cents a meeting. The object of this circle, as the name implies, was to sew and make useful articles and fancy work, etc., to be sold at a bazaar which would be held at the end of the year, near Christmas time.

Our first supper and bazaar was held uptown at the Potter Post hall, on November 25, 1916. That this first venture in this line was a success will speak for itself, for we cleared the neat sum of \$228.85. Our bazaars have been an annual event ever since and were always a success.

In January, 1917, we were glad to donate \$200.00 to the congregation, toward paying for the paving adjoining the church property. In February, the Circle had the telephone installed in the parsonage, which was thought a necessity and convenience for both minister and members of the congregation. The phone bills are paid by the Guild and Ladies Aid. This same year during the World War our society also did its bit by going to the Red Cross rooms to help sew for the soldier boys. In April, we changed the name of the society from German Sewing Circle to Evangelical Guild.

The Guild presented the church with a new piano in December, 1918 as a Christmas present.

A committee was appointed in January 1920 to get permission from the Deacons of the church to build an addition to the school house to be used as a kitchen and fix it up so that we could hold our meetings there. Permission was granted, and we undertook the responsibility of the building and the expense thereof. On April 21, 1920, we held our first meeting there and are having them there up to the present time. At this time the dues were raised to ten cents a member at each meeting and this amount is now being paid.

With the aid of the Sunday School Society and the Ladies Aid we have equipped the building with electric lights, tables and chairs, dishes and cooking utensils, two sewing machines, stove, cupboards, etc., which makes it more convenient for all. The Guild also pays the monthly light bills for the church and school house combined, and always helps financially with any debt to which they are asked to contribute.

At present we have twenty-seven members and thirteen of these are charter members. We have lost several members by their removal from the city, but up to the present date we have not lost a member by death. Looking back over the twelve years of labor, we can truly say that we have been prosperous, and we feel that our efforts have not been in vain, for which we should be thankful.

With a sum of about \$1500.00 in the treasury, and the promise of a new Parish Hall in the near future, we hope that our St. John's Evangelical Guild, with God's help, will prosper more and more as the years go by.



ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL GUILD

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Membership Roll

*Louise Alderson, Alma Birkner, Anna Birkner, Louise Birkner, *Charlotte Birkner, Monica Birkner, Anna Boortz, Elsie Boll, *Ida Collings, *Julia Conde, Clara Eastman, *Freda Galehouse, *Eva Hartley, Edna Hixinbaugh, *Olga Heessel, Vera Hipes, Mary Jandrey, *Emily Ohlschlager, *Ida Oshel, *Julia Pontow, *Margaret Pontow, *Olga Russell, *Frances Strunce, Mary Schultz, Helene Vogel, Minnie Welcher, Minnie Zahl.

The names marked with a star are charter members.

* * * *

JUNIOR LEAGUE

The Junior League of St. John's Evangelical Church was organized on September 20, 1922 for the purpose of advancing its young people in Christian life and faith and to instruct them in church work, missionary enterprises and religious movements.

The first president was Miss Anna Strey and the patronesses were Miss Monica Birkner and Mrs. Lena Case. The present membership is thirty-four. Meetings are held each Wednesday evening in the church and are of a devotional, business and social nature.

Each year a delegate is sent to the Central Iowa Federation Convention.

The present officers are: President, Miss Olga Collings; Vice-President, Wm. Schultz; Secretary, Miss Maxine Vetterick; Financial Secretary, Miss Darlene Finch; Treasurer, Miss Arline Pontow and the patronesses are Mrs. Lena Case and Miss Arline Pontow.



DARLENE FINCH, ARLINE PONTOW, MRS. LENA CASE, MAXINE VETTERICK, OLGA COLLINGS.



THE BROTHERHOOD

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL BROTHERHOOD

On Sunday evening, March 7, 1926, eleven young men met after the services to plan the organization of the present Brotherhood. The success of which is easily seen, as there are now 67 names on the roll call.

The principle object for organizing this Brotherhood was to have some body to take care of a New Church Building Fund, a fund that is to be used for the only purpose, the erection of a new church building.

Along with this the Brotherhood strives to create a more brotherly feeling among our church members, to help out when help is needed, and to get and keep our men interested in their church.

The present officers are: Frank Boortz, president; John Elftmann, vice-president; H. J. Birkner, secretary; Paul Waltersdorf, treasurer. Directors are: E. A. Pontow, H. A. Vetterick, Wm. Elftmann, F. E. Pontow, Geo. Herbel, D. Eastman.



CONCLUSION

We trust that this little volume, setting forth in its own simple manner some of the most noteworthy events in the history of St. Johns Evangelical Church, may help to bring to mind the humble beginnings as well as the growth of the congregation. If we have prospered as a congregation, it is only because the God of our Fathers, whom we worship, has graciously bestowed His bountiful blessings upon the efforts of the congregation throughout the years. To Him alone be the glory.

May this booklet continue to remind us of the one true source of all progress and success in the days to come. May from this church flow forth blessing to all who worship within its walls, and may the Gospel of Jesus Christ ever be held aloft in all its endeavors.

"And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God, the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be and abide with us all, now and forever more."

This file was scanned and assembled by
Rev Daniel J. Moore, the pastor of St John's in
Creston, in March of 2009. We are now known
as St John's United Church of Christ. We still
worship every Sunday in the same church building
that was dedicated on August 11, 1878.

St John's UCC
601 South Maple St.
Creston, Iowa 50801
<http://stjohnsucc.freewebpage.org>